

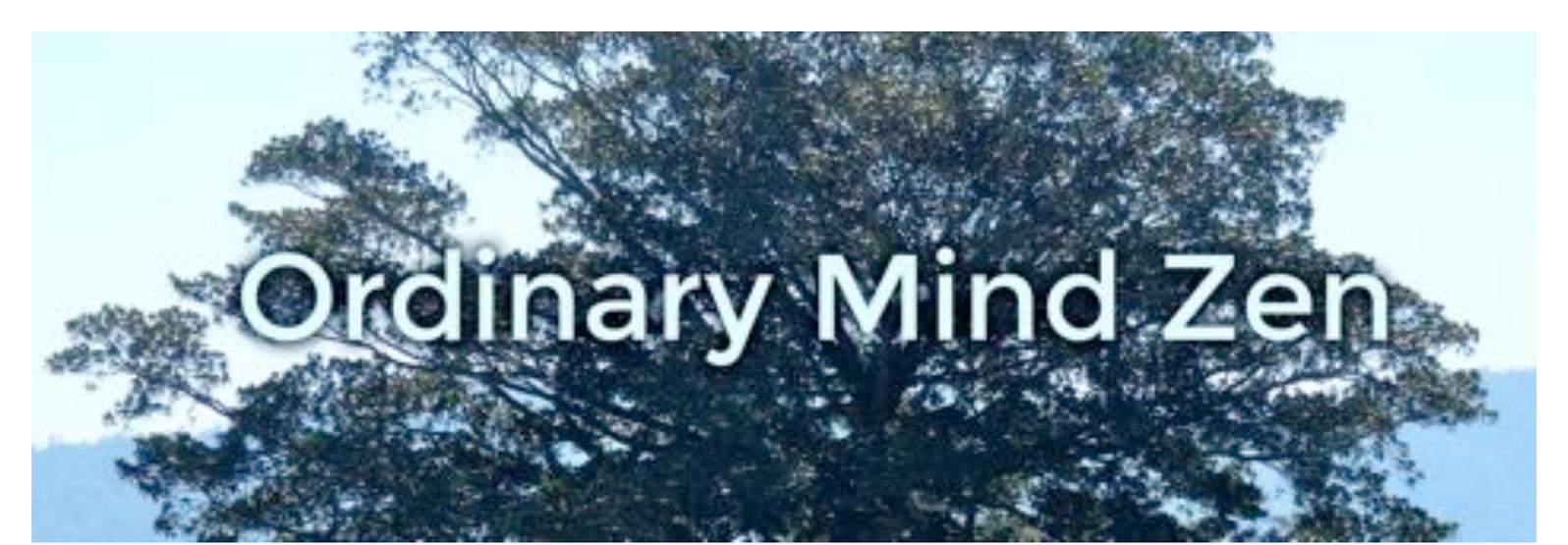


Ordinary Mind Zen

NEWS – JANUARY- 2016

The Zen Path to Self-Acceptance:

Welcome to the New Year everyone! In the first half of this year I will be focusing my dharma talks on the theme of *self-acceptance* and the psychological barriers we encounter in accepting ourselves just as we are. In particular, one of the most common and insidious barriers we encounter is *shame*, in all its various forms ranging from a sense of personal failure, of not being good enough, inadequacy, and rejection. In my work as a therapist and Zen teacher, I have often been struck by the pervasiveness of shame in our experience of self in this culture and have asked myself why this is the case. I am also curious about how the experience of shame is related to the basic sense of dissatisfaction and disconnection from the spontaneous experience of the joy of being alive. That basic feeling that there is something missing from our lives that often leads to people beginning their spiritual journey. Therefore, we will examine the origins of what I will be calling the *shame-based self* in developmental trauma and the hierarchical culture of evaluation, self-improvement and competitiveness we all live in.

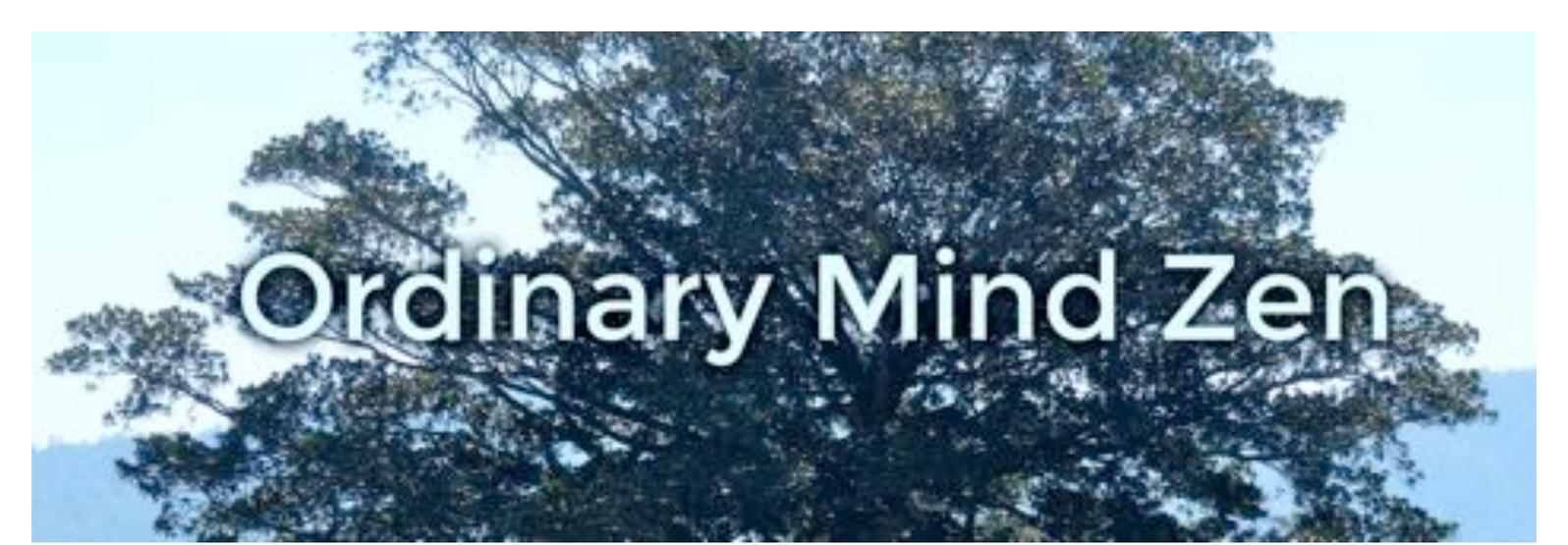


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Practice Focus:

Firstly, we need to *understand* how the shame-based sense of ourselves originated. Shame, like guilt, is a social emotion. However, shame is a very different emotion to guilt – shame is associated with our global sense of self, whereas guilt is associated with a particular behaviour. We begin to experience shame very early in our development, round about the age of 18 months to two years (as contrasted to guilt which starts at about 8 years). Hence some of our earliest experiences of shame would lie outside of our narrative conscious memories. However, most of us can recall episodes of nonrecognition and invalidation beginning in our family of origin and expanding as we attend school. Hierarchy and competition, particularly in the form of sibling rivalry is fertile soil for shame experiences. School only expands our exposure to a larger culture of hierarchy, evaluation and competition, thus rendering us vulnerable to more shame experiences such as sense of personal failure. Finally, we enter the workforce and meet shame again in different forms, often triggering our memories of earlier developmental trauma.

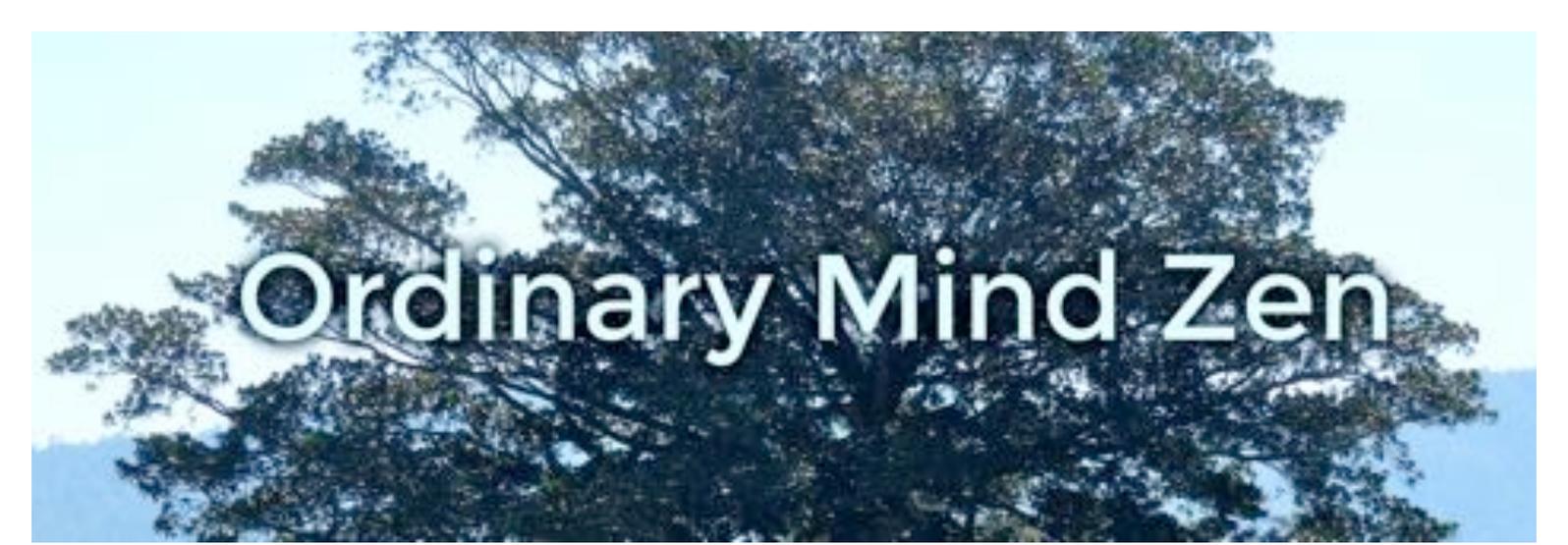
Secondly, in liberating ourselves from the legacy of developmental shame, we need to observe how shame operates in our present lives and to be mindful of how we get triggered, including the various defensive strategies we employ to



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protect ourselves from the emotional pain of shame. Our experience of self is often so covered over with layers of shame (or the fear of being shamed) that we tend to hide our light (our natural spontaneous self) behind these strategies. This is what we call the practice of *self-observation*. We need to see how we get caught in holding onto our shame-based self, step-back from our identification with its various forms and begin to cultivate our *compassionate observer self*. The cultivation of the compassionate observer self helps us to allow and accept the difficult emotions without engaging in the habitual reactions that shame typically produces.

Shame comes in many forms but the key to understanding it is how we relate to ourselves. As previously mentioned, it is different to guilt, which is about a particular behaviour that we acknowledge was harmful towards another. Shame is about our identification with the judgment that our self is “bad”, “not good enough,” “inadequate” and seriously flawed. When our sense of shame is triggered we may feel intense reactivity from its association with traumatic memories of very early developmental wounds when we were younger. We may even find ourselves flying into a rage! Through our zazen practice and through our practice in our everyday life, we can begin to observe the many ways in which we are still caught in the various emotions and negative cognitions that shame brings in its wake.



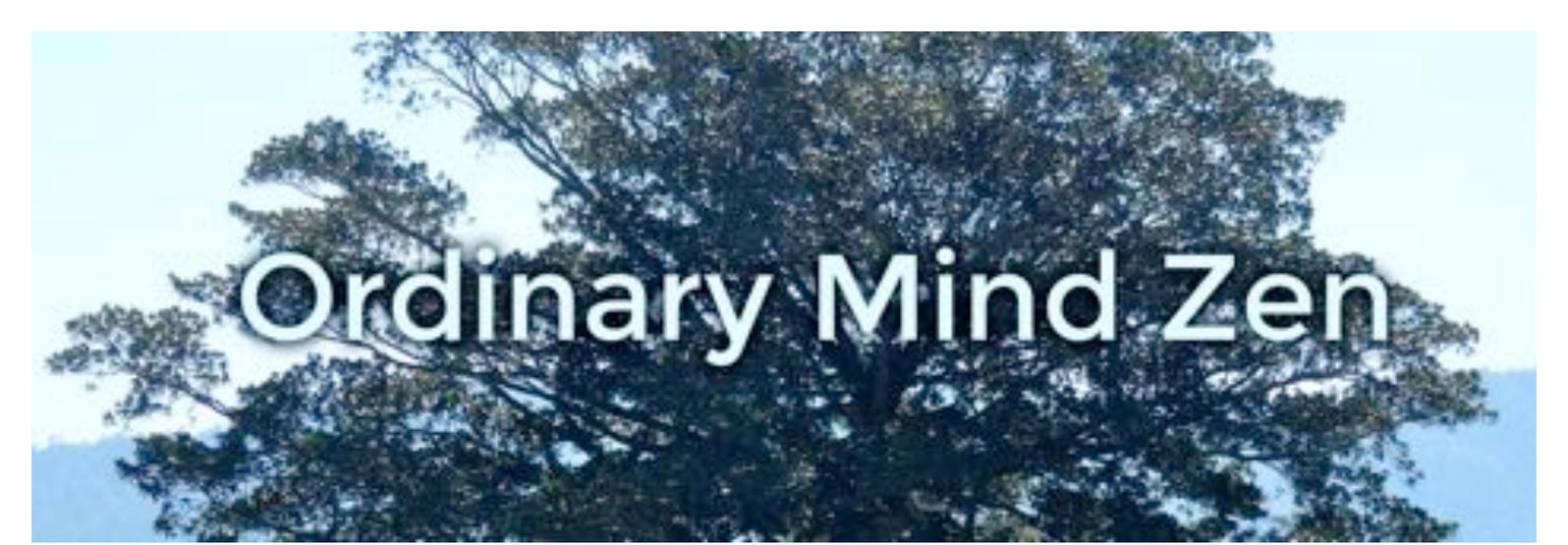
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We are therefore going to devote the first half of this year of practice to how we relate to ourselves. Apart from giving talks on the topic of shame there will be opportunities during individual interviews to reflect on how shame has impacted on your life. As the year progresses I will be encouraging participants to share some of their own experience of how shame has impacted on their lives with the group.

I therefore look forward to sharing our common experiences with shame and look forward to hearing stories of how we have successfully liberated ourselves from shame and the fear of shame, and how we can enjoy the ease and freedom of simply allowing ourselves to be ourselves!

Hope to see you soon,

Andrew.



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New Schedule for 2016!

I am excited to announce we will be offering *three one day* sittings at the Sawtell Zendo in the first half of this year and *three half-day* sittings at the Promised Land Zendo in the first half of the year. So 2016 offers us an excellent opportunity to take some time out from our busy lives for group zazen practice. Remember also, to try and sit at least once per day for a minimum of 20 minutes. Please see pages below:

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Sawtell Zendo

2016 Calendar from January to June

Sunday	January	10	Morning sitting* resumes
Sunday	January	24	Morning sitting
Sunday	February	7	Morning sitting
Sunday	February	21	One day sitting**
Sunday	March	6	Morning sitting
Sunday	March	20	Morning sitting
Sunday	April	3	Morning sitting
Sunday	April	17	One day sitting
Sunday	May	1	Morning sitting
Sunday	May	15	Morning sitting
Sunday	May	29	Morning sitting
Sunday	June	12	One day sitting
Sunday	June	26	Morning sitting

*Morning sitting is from 10-12 **One day sitting is from 9-3pm.



Promised Land Zendo
2016 Calendar from January to June

Saturday	January	16	Morning sitting* resumes
Saturday	January	30	Morning sitting
Saturday	February	13	Morning sitting
Saturday	February	27	Half-day sitting**
Saturday	March	12	Morning sitting
Saturday	March	26	Closed for Easter Holidays
Sunday	April	10	Morning sitting
Sunday	April	24	Half-day sitting
Sunday	May	8	Morning sitting
Sunday	May	22	Morning sitting
Sunday	June	5	Morning sitting
Sunday	June	19	Half-day sitting

*Morning sitting is from 10am-1200pm.

**Half-day sitting is from 9am-1230pm.